



**For Immediate Release
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**STATE APPOINTS LOCAL FIREFIGHTER
TO IMPLEMENT HOMEOWNER *FIREWISE* PROGRAM**

Today, the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) Bureau of Forest Fire Control and Forestry announced the addition of Kara Shemeth of to the state's firefighting staff.

Shemeth will be based in Manuel F. Correllus State Forest on Martha's Vineyard, and her responsibilities will include the implementation of DCR's *Firewise* fire-prevention program, which is funded through U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Forest Service grants. The *Firewise* program is a national, multi-agency endeavor designed to involve homeowners, community leaders, planners, developers, and others in an effort to protect people, property and natural resources from wildland fire.

"I'm very pleased with the addition of Ms. Shemeth to DCR's fire control staff," said DCR Commissioner Stephen H. Burrington. "With her academic credentials, wildfire-fighting skills, USDA Forest Service experience, and long-term ties to Martha's Vineyard, Shemeth will be a great asset for the community."

Shemeth was born and raised on Martha's Vineyard and attended Franklin Pierce College in New Hampshire. In 2003, she joined AmeriCorps National Civilian Community Corps and served with the USDA Forest Service in Colorado for two years. While in Colorado, she was a full-time wildland firefighter involved in wildfire suppression, detection, and education.

The *Firewise* program offers a series of practical steps that homeowners can take to minimize the risk of wildfire damage to their property. As the population of Martha's Vineyard has grown, more new homes have been built in rural areas. This has increased the amount of residential property that abuts wildland, which puts homes at increased risk of wildfire damage. However, through the *Firewise* program, DCR will advise homeowners on preventative measures that can greatly reduce this risk.

Shemeth will be available for free home assessments. She will also work closely with the island's local fire departments, and will compile a list of qualified contractors who are able to carry out work that may be recommended. Work could range from mowing vegetation around the property to limb and tree removal.

COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS · EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS

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Martha's Vineyard homeowners interested in participating in the *Firewise* program should contact Shemeth at 508-693-2540 for further information or to set up a home assessment.

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